DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 269 830 CS 505 291

AUTHOR Cohen, Marlene C.
TITLE Crossing the Bridge: Teaching Credit and Noncredit Courses for the Community College.
PUB DATE 1 May 86
NOTE 7p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Eastern Communication Association (77th, Atlantic City, NJ, April 30-May 3, 1986).
PUB TYPE Reports - Descriptive (141) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Consultants; *Credit Courses; Higher Education; *Noncredit Courses; Professional Development; Program Descriptions; Program Development; *School Business Relationship; *School Community Relationship; *Speech Communication; Teacher Attitudes; Teaching Styles; Two Year Colleges

ABSTRACT

By fall of 1986, the mechanism should be in place for the speech faculty of a Maryland community college to be able to teach any combination of academic credit, community service noncredit, and off-campus training as part of their teaching contract. Noncredit courses include Parent-Child Communication and Overcoming Speech Anxiety. The noncredit enrollment option into credit courses on campus includes Public Speaking and Television Production. Contract training off-campus in business and industry includes Making Meetings Work and On-the-Job Interaction Skills. Credit courses offered off-campus at industrial parks include Public Speaking and Working Effectively in Groups. Speech faculty must be prepared to take on many roles for such noncredit programs to be successful, including that of a liaison for the department who will market and design courses, and that of course planner. Teaching styles will also require adjustment, starting with the skills orientation of the course titles, the "passing" policy of grading in the courses, and the prior research required to adapt each course to its audience. Success for the program requires that the costs and profits be shared across the credit/noncredit line. (HTH)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

X This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

ED269830

CROSSING THE BRIDGE: TEACHING CREDIT AND NONCREDIT COURSES FOR THE COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Marlene C. Cohen

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Marlene C. Cohen

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

CS 505291

CROSSING THE BRIDGE: TEACHING CREDIT AND NONCREDIT COURSES FOR THE COMMUNITY COLLEGE

A Paper Presented at the 77th Eastern Communication Association Convention, Atlantic City, N.J., May 1, 1986

Marlene C. Cohen
Prince George's Community College, MD

In the summer of 1985, the simultaneous occurrence of several changes at Prince George's Community College created the right atmosphere for an exciting redefinition of my faculty position.

After years of efforts to satisfy my desires for both college teaching and communication consulting in the community, it was clear that the college faculty position had the potential to offer both to its faculty. By fall of 1986, the mechanism should be in place for Prince George's Community College speech faculty members to be able to teach any combination of academic credit, community service noncredit, and off-campus training as part of their teaching contract.

That combination of the right factors for such a proposal for Prince George's included the following: the appointment of a new Dean of Instruction whose past experience in both transfer and nontransfer programs made him amenable to blurring the dividing line, a speech faculty whose ten years behind them and twenty years ahead made them ready for more variety in their jobs, a decline in credit student enrollment which encouraged some creative rethinking, an increasing enrollment in noncredit courses, and a boom in county business development.

This semester I am serving as a liaison of the Department of Speech Communication and Theatre to the noncredit or continuing education area of the college to plan and to administer noncredit course offerings. This paper will identify the following issues that have emerged as relevant to such speech training development:

The goals of such a program,
The types of course offerings appropriate for noncredit,
The roles speech faculty must take on to insure success,
The changes in teaching style necessary for noncredit course teaching, and
The barriers to overcome when linking credit and noncredit areas of a college.

Why attempt to develop noncredit speech communication courses?

1. It increases speech course offerings, thus total credit hours, thus, our bread and butter.

2. It taps the creativity, specific expertise and interests

of full and part-time faculty who, at the community college, teach primarily introductory courses and seldom get the opportunity to teach specific communication topics in depth.

3. It provides new avenues that prevent faculty burnout.

Then consider three added benefits to the college; the college reaps some of the profit from faculty consulting in the community, the college strengthens its links to the community through this consulting, and the college personnel are more closely linked as credit and noncredit staff work together.

Dr. Dennis Bartow, Dean of Instruction at P.G.C.C., argues that the credit/noncredit distinctions in education are blurring as needs for learning alter. Thus a redefining of "credit" and "noncredit" is inevitable. Further, as noncredit needs increase, faculty participation in that arena is essential for faculty to remain at the core of the college's activities.

This participation in the institution's noncredit technical training may not be new to those in the business and technical areas of community colleges, but is relatively new ground for those in the humanities. Speech communication professionals are already aware of the numerous practical skills and knowledge which their field can offer through consulting. Listed here are some ideas of our department for courses appropriate to different nontraditional audiences.

Noncredit courses offered on campus:
- Parent-Child Communication
- Overcoming Speech Anxiety
- Couples Communication
- One Day Seminar of Managerial Skills

Noncredit enrollment option into credit courses on campus:
- Public Speaking (divided into three-five week options)
- Interviewing (divided into two-eight week options)
- Television Production (divided into two-eight week options)

Contract Training off-campus at business, industry, and government locations:
- Preparing to Speak in Public
- Making Meetings Work
- The Effective Voice
- On-the-Job Interaction Skills

Credit courses offered off-campus at industrial parks:
- Public Speaking
- Working Effectively in Groups

Teaching the courses seems to be the easiest part of this

operation. There are many roles that speech faculty must be prepared to take on for such noncredit programs to be successful. These roles will require hours which need to be built into the schedules of those who will oversee such noncredit involvement of the department. Following are roles I feel essential to our development of such a program.

I am recommending the establishment of an on-going liaison from the department who will perform many tasks. One is going out to businesses to market courses and design new courses to fulfill particular needs. It is clear that, because our Contract Training coordinator could not identify what types of courses would fulfill a particular caller's communication need, some opportunities for additional consulting were missed. Effective marketing also includes development of marketing materials and keeping up with business contacts.

A department member also must take responsibility for course planning. At our college this includes assisting the noncredit staff in cleaning up existing communication courses which are redundant and out-of-date. Decisions must be made regarding what to offer, in what size package, including what units of study. Careful audience analysis and research is essential to plan a course that will fulfill the daily communication needs of the selected government and business personnel. The noncredit personnel has greatly appreciated the benefit of faculty in a specific field who can make such decisions as well as identify the gaps in the list of current course offerings.

Further as a result of this semester project, I am now planning a course we will offer to the faculty at an orientation session on what it takes to teach noncredit. I am now strongly convinced that some faculty should not pursue this avenue and should be assisted in determining that they would not be happy teaching in a noncredit environment. Others seek guidance on how to make the switch.

How should one's teaching be altered for the community/business audience? Surely as communication professionals trained to audience analysis and adaptation, we should take to such changes. But it requires attitude changes that some would prefer not to make.

Start with the course title; from the first step the language and units of study should reflect a strong skills focus and a very direct approach to the topic of communication. I suspect all community college professionals have already altered from their university styles along these lines, but further change is needed for effectiveness.

Everyone who attends a noncredit course "passes," earning a certificate and perhaps C.E.U. (Continuing Education Unit)

credit. The faculty members who are determined to evaluate and to reward and punish should not teach in this atmosphere. This power of the teacher is eliminated. In fact, I feel most effective when I perceive myself as an equal to the members of the noncredit class.

The instructor role is that of an expert sharing experience and tips. Analysis of each groups' experiences and application of specific research takes up much time that might have been devoted to more general lecture. Hypotheticals are replaced by specific dos and don'ts as applicable as possible to the specific world of the participants. That of course requires prior research to succeed in adapting to each audience; the same course cannot be delivered as is to various companies.

Some audience members will give a faculty member high credibility, while others will see that credential as a sign the trainer is removed from the realities of business communication situations. Being prepared means many hours of additional preparation.

As I gathered information on my campus to determine the feasibility of the changes described above, I became aware of many attitudinal barriers, as we debaters call them, that must be overcome for credit/noncredit teaching to blend effectively.

Some faculty on the credit side of the college look down on the noncredit side. Some assume the "academic approach" to teaching is always the best, and resent the demand to "give them what they want." Any other approach is watering down material, that theory suggests; the use of layman's language is a distortion. Hence the need for orientation and full discussion of what the contracting company needs from an instructor. It is essential to minimize the risk of alienating a client due to such mismatched perceptions.

The noncredit staff fear faculty intrusion into their blossoming program. Given the faculty's significant role on the campus, the fear is that their involvement will lead to their control. There is also a resentment that only now, with credit enrollment decreasing and noncredit enrollment on the increase, are they being taken seriously.

In addition the mechanics of mixing credit and noncredit on a faculty member's schedule and a department's offerings, plus coordinating, in some cases, credit and noncredit students in the same classroom, requires changes in the college's record-keeping procedures. These are not insurmountable, but are major undertakings.

Because contracts can come up at the last minute, and community services courses can fail to fill late into the academic

semester, the speech department will suffer some pains in planning faculty schedules for the semester. Our current conservative approach will be redefine a faculty member's contract as a commitment for a year, not two semesters. Then fall schedules of those who choose to teach noncredit could carry over the usual number of hours, with the balance of the year's hours required in the spring term. That is safer than counting on spring hours that do not materialize. Of course overtime pay is always another option.

Success of the program I am supporting also requires that the costs and profits be shared across the credit/noncredit line. Since our noncredit area pays salaries at a rate equal to that of credit part-time instructors, the cost of replacing a full-time faculty member with a part-time instructor in a credit class is the same as the noncredit area's costs to use an instructor from off-campus. There is no additional expense to the college when faculty teach noncredit courses. The growth in the number of noncredit courses will make the venture profitable.

My limited experiment to involve the speech faculty in the development and teaching of noncredit courses tells me that giving the option to teach noncredit as part of the teaching load makes for better teachers. The noncredit courses become part of the job for them, not a sideline. The opportunities to teach particular topics of interest has sparked enthusiasm and creativity, timely during budget-tightening and declining enrollments. Additionally, the experience of consulting always provides current, specific examples that can be brought back to improve the credit students' classroom experience.

I am currently in the process of researching the procedures of other campuses to use speech faculty in nontraditional teaching situations. I would appreciate receiving information about your college's efforts in this direction.